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OUTLOOK NOTES

THE high school is our one American educational specialty. Due solely to the marvelous development of this unique institution, the United States is able to report as many students in **TYRANNY AND TRAGEDY** secondary schools as Germany, France, and England combined. The support granted to the high school is, all in all, generous and adequate. The interests intrusted to it are of vital importance to national strength and prosperity. The teaching force is good, and rapidly becoming better. To paint a glowing impressionist picture of the high-school situation is an easy and grateful task, to which end many pens have been dipped in liquid gold and many silvery tongues been loosened.

But during the past summer tragedies have been enacted on this stage; tragedies of intense local interest, and tragedies that have national significance. In at least three of the largest western cities high-school principals of long experience and high standing in the profession have been compelled to resign or have ruthlessly been "dropped" for reasons neither personal nor professional. The schools under their charge were all in admirable condition, the men themselves were among the recognized leaders in the profession. None were approaching the time when age might set bounds to their achievements. In one case so secretly was the matter managed that no hint of a proposed change

reached the principal or his friends until the time came in the board meeting to elect the principal, when another man was nominated and immediately elected. In all cases the action was a part of the smallest caliber politics.

These principals and their fate are known from one end of the country to the other. They stand today as high in the esteem of their fellow teachers as they ever stood. The tragedies in their own lives have called forth the warmest sympathy. They will, no doubt, be able to take up some other lines of business; or, in time, they may secure positions in other school systems, leaving home and friends and going out into a new world, not of their own inclination, but because they must if they wish to continue the work to which they had dedicated their lives. In no other profession, from bootblack to judge, is such tyranny possible.

Hundreds of high-minded teachers have paused in their career of professional progress to ask themselves the question whether it is not better for them to change to some other line of work before they are too old to carve out a career in another field. What is the use of their striving for eminence in high-school work if they are to be rewarded with decapitation as soon as their heads appear above the crowd?

Some thousands of teachers are vitally affected by this matter, but their interests are as nothing compared to hundreds of thousands of children and millions of citizens. There is no question among civilized nations any longer that a nation to be strong must be educated. Prussia discovered this fact at the beginning of the century; France, after Sedan, decided that it was the Prussian schoolmaster that conquered; England is just now arousing to the full significance in national development of opportunities for the secondary education of the masses; but no country has done so much in providing a high grade of education for all as has the United States. Still, beautiful schoolhouses, expensive laboratories, splendid libraries, lavish expenditure of all kinds are mere gorgeous show, unless the highest grade of teaching capacity controls and utilizes all this equipment. The prizes that the teaching profession offers are at best inconsiderable

from a wordly point of view by the side of the attractions offered in law, medicine, and other learned callings. But to permit political influences so to shape the situation that a man who has obtained the prize, thereby demonstrating his capacity for leadership, shall at any moment have that prize summarily wrested from his grasp, be again degraded to the ranks, or forced to escape to another city or state, or, worse yet, driven after years of dearly-bought experience out of the work to which he would gladly devote his life—such a policy as this is calamitous. Only follow it long enough and we shall surely have our schools manned by the unambitious, the ill-trained, the low-idealed, the narrow-gauged. Shall we inscribe over the doors of our high schools, "Only the best are good enough to guide our youth," or that other splendid motto, "Anyone is good enough to look after children?" If the people once understand this question, there cannot possibly be any doubt as to their answer.

C. H. THURBER